FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

"For a world united in prayer"

Volume XXIX / Number 2 / April 1978

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.

200 East 36th Street, Room 10-E, New York, N.Y.
Send all mail to Box 3049, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William Hung, President Emeritus Peter V. K. Funk, President Emeritus

Reuben L. Musey, President

Narcissa Chamberlain, Vice President Francis Merchant, Vice President
Paul Griffith, Vice President Edwiene Schmitt, Vice President

Samuel M. Silver

Kathryn G. Brown
Secretary of the Corporation & Editorial Consultant

Herrymon Maurer, Executive Secretary

Paul Griffith, Editor Joseph Porcelli, Treasurer

Joy Bergman, Assistant Secretary

ADVISORS

Ray Allen Albert (Virginia)
Velta Myrle Allen (California)
Dorothy Barko (New York)
Katherine L. Beech (Illinois)
Dennis Barry Carroll (Maryland)
Emilie, Lady Coote (England)
Juliet H. Crist (California)
Zelma S. Dennis (California)
Georgia Palmer Dishner (Tennesee)
Marion Freeman (Massachusetts)
John Akpan Imah (Nigeria)
Hsuan-min Liu (Canada)
Georgia H. Marin (New Hampshire)
Mrs. Reuben L. Musey (Maryland)
Mrs. Charles Oakes (North Carolina)
Mrs. Mildred Seydell (Georgia)

Dr. Teh-yao Wu (Singapore)

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Emily Sargent Councilman
Betty Miller Daly
William Walter De Bolt
Eleanor Ebersole
Nixeon Civille Handy
Catherine Cabeen Houck
Lillian Koerner
Mildred Long
Emma S. McLaughlin
Carla Patsuris
Marion J. Richardson
Swami Ritajananda

The purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

Volume XXIX / Number 2 / April 1978

CONTENTS

7 "I Remember Her" *by Dot Thomas*
9 More Light *by May Sarton*
11 Make Mine A Whopper *by James E. Kurtz*
13 "Why Do You Pray?" *by Bernadine Friedrich*
13 Motivation *by Pollyanna Sedziol*
14 How To Accept Life *by Mildred Long*
19 The Holidays Jesus Observed (Part One) *by Samuel M. Silver*
29 Nature's Beauty *by Virginia Ladd Otis*
30 Accept The Challenge *by Arthur W. Muller*
31 Defining What Is Wanted & Other Stories *by Francis Merchant*

Poems, *pages 6, 27, and back covers*

3 Editorial *4* President's Comments *35* Notices & Comment

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Ruth Allison Lilly

Copyright 1978 by Fellowship In Prayer, Inc.

CHAPLINESQUE
BIJOU
CHAPLINESQUE
BIJOU
CHAPLINESQUE
BIJOU

Tom Dunham

EDITORIAL

LONELINESS -- 11

THE ACCIDENTS OF ONE LIFE prove nothing as a general rule. But loneliness exists in our society (there are societies in which it doesn't) and as Anais Nin suggests it exists more extensively and at a more devastating level than most of us admit. Loneliness is so contrary to our ideal, it hints at the possibility of so many shortcomings within ourselves, that in my experience I have met up with very few individuals willing to mention it. For me personally this meant that when I happened to be at my loneliest I felt even lonelier because my case appeared to be unique.

A certain amount and a certain degree of loneliness are inescapable, however, to those who belong to our society. How can you avoid it physically, emotionally, or spiritually? As you leave home and go to college, you are bound to feel at least a moment of it. As you leave college and go to the big city to find a job, it is there. And it is there again when you quit your first job to move to another state to take a bigger and better job. And it is there yet again when you retire and sell your house and move to a retirement community. It is built into our highly mobile way of life in which everything is possible to us and all our life's struggles are finally crowned with a glowing sense of our specialness. Here, by the way, is another of our society's standard operating procedures which is highly productive of loneliness---namely, our precious all-important search for identity. Identity is what we break our backs for nowadays instead of money. It is our obsession. Those who succeed in our eyes are the ones who "have found themselves," while those who fail are the ones who "never found themselves." We pity them. And lest we do the same we consult psychiatrists and sign up for encounter-groups. We think about it all the time.

"Who *am* I?" I remember desperately asking myself as I strolled through the deserted campus of the university I went to. I had no idea. I was terrified to have no idea. (This was one of my first real tastes of loneliness---which for me always has panic in it.) As it happened, a Presidential election was coming up, the first in which I was

(Continued on page 36)

ISLAM

THE ONLY MAJOR WORLD RELIGION which originated after Christianity is Islam. Its followers worship the same God as Christians and Jews but, according to their belief, in purer form. They accept Jesus, Moses, and David as prophers although to them Muhammed is the greatest prophet of all. They accept the Bible as one of the revelations of God although to them the Koran is the complete and final revelation of Him.

The faith of Islam came out of the desert of Arabia--a hard, forbidding country of sand and rock whose people have known the searing sun and thirst and hunger. They are a people whose eyes are accustomed to scan far horizons, to see bleak bones in the sand and shimmering mirages.

The founder of Islam --Muhammed-- was born in the city of Mecca. As far as historians have been able to discover, the date was A.D. 750. An orphan from early childhood, he was raised by relatives of the noble clan of Koreish. They were the guardians of the central sanctuary of the Arabians --the Kaaba-- a square temple containing idols and a sacred stone that had fallen at some time from heaven.

Muhammed grew up in a religious atmosphere. Many times in his early life he witnessed the nomadic tribes coming in pilgrimage from all over Arabia to worship at the Kaaba.

At the age of forty, Muhammed had a vision of the Angel Gabriel who told him he had been chosen to be the mouthpiece of God. After this revelation, he began to preach in the streets of Mecca. He wished to reform the beliefs and customs of the people, whom he believed to be at the mercy of the money-making schemes of the Koreish. He preached against idolatry, the killing of unwanted baby girls, greed and deceit. Hellfire was as much his subject as it had been of Old Testament Prophets.He moved from Mecca to Yathrib, a town of which the name was later changed in his honor to "City of the Prophet." He devoted the remainder of his life to the promulgation of his beliefs.

After his death, his followers began to collect his revelations and sayings, which had been haphazardly written down on stones, palm leaves, camels' bones, and parchment.

The word "Islam" means "submission" -- complete surrender to God. There are five pillars of faith: the first being an understanding of the meaning of Islam, the second a discipline of daily prayer. The others comprise the giving of a tenth of one's income to the poor and the support and expansion of the faith, a fasting in the month of Ramadan (the month in which Muhammed received his first revelation), and an annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Islam claims to be the fullest revelation of God. Its believers regard it as superior to all the religions that came before it. Consequently it is a difficult religion to approach.

The God of Islam is thought to be an absolute monarch, who rules the destinies of the world. Man can do nothing about his predetermined fate but submit completely.

Reuben L. Musey

Reuben L. Musey, President

IN A FLOWERING DAWN

Conrad Pendleton

Nature
(that sometimes quakes
huge faults in continents
and makes
typhoons and hurricanes,
and through the years has shaped
Grand Canyon and Mount Everest)
dew-beads this spiderweb
strung geometrically in silver seams
from flowering twigs of rimrock rose,
while azure butterflies
slow-flock, like Eden dreams,
to wild bluebells and goldenglows---
all April images of Nature's revery.

FROM THE GRAY WORLD

Joy Bergman

We come from the gray world
where seagulls screaming
are common things,
and white skies are a common thing
and duck ponds, and marshes are common things.

Can you imagine being surrounded
by so much beauty
Gray and white and brown-green
and not wanting to say Hurrah?

Where I was born where I come from
Where I am going
When they take me away
and put me in a shroud
of white linen.

And I am white and part of the marsh skies,
And my body returns to the earth
and becomes part of a duckling.

"I REMEMBER HER"

Dot Thomas

HER NAME WAS ROSEMARY and she was a Christian friend. It took her death to teach me how to live --- to really live each day as God would have me live it.

She had a struggle with her health. The doctors did all they could. But cancer won out. She believed in life, she loved life, she lived life --- and the doctors told her she had three months to live. She showed her emotions, and her faith took over.

Her family was in shock because they saw her as losing her struggle. But was she really? She prepared her family for her death. She taught them that life is for the living. She wanted to lighten their grief.

Her friends agonized, "How can we help her?" and felt helpless.

People who did not even know her marveled at her faith and examined their own.

Some thought it was horrible when she planned her own funeral. They said, "How could she?" Yet she did.

There was the time she joked about the pallbearers dropping her casket if she wasn't nice to them while she was alive.

Some days she rebelled against dying because she didn't want to leave her family. She loved them, and they needed her.

One dawn she called me and said she just wanted to talk, and I listened.

There were days when she begged us, ' 'Don't treat me like I am dying!' ' Yet she was.

Her pastor ministered to her, sometimes praying, sometimes crying, sometimes laughing. They shared their faith.

Five days before her death, she asked me what I thought heaven was like. I wondered myself. I tried to give her comfort by telling her quality of life was more important than quantity. Could I have said it if I had been in her shoes?

My Christian friend did die, but her death was a victory, and I will always remember her. □

More Light

May Sarton

LATELY we have had a great infusion of information about the old. They are this or that, we are told. They are a problem. We must show concern. They are suddenly at sixty-five called "senior citizens"--though no one has ever heard of a junior citizen and citizenship is hardly a category since it is almost universal. I mind being stuffed into a pigeonhole, "taken care of" as though I had ceased to exist as a growing person. I begin to feel like a leper, for old age, too, there is no cure.

When I was seventeen, I already began to look forward to being old. Far from a liability I saw it as possibly the most interesting of adventures to come, and in that vision I was not far wrong. My sixty-fifth year, just past, has been the happiest and most fruitful so far. I do not see dimunition except in sustained energy, but the lack of energy is more than made up for by my knowing better how to handle myself. I have more fun because I am less compulsive, less driven by time, curiously enough, and more able to "take life easy as the grass grows on the weirs."

It is not, perhaps, that the old are a problem, but that the best things about old age are so outside our ethos that we cannot, some of us, even imagine a state of growth that might have to do with contemplation, pure joy, and above all the elimination of the nonessential.

It is the privilege of the old to feel less guilt about the undone, and what a joy that can be! Material things become less and less important, though small comforts are a help (but then, at what age are they not? My mother could not have survived without a cup of tea in the afternoon.)

The old have more right to self-interest, in the sense of self-exploration. I shocked an old friend the other day by saying, "I am more interested in myself than in anyone else." She took it as a sign of horrifying egotism, but at sixty-five and after I think we have earned the right to make our souls in peace, and the making of a soul depends on time, time for reflection, time that may look empty from the outside.

"Poor old man sitting in the sun doing nothing," we might think. But the old man on a park bench may actually be very busy *doing* noth-

ing, because he is *being* something. He may, to use a haunting phrase of Florida Scott-Maxwell's, be "blind with insight." Self-exploration is a natural organic way toward understanding the universal. Whatever may be discovered is, at any rate, authentic.

The myth of old age as chiefly disability---as a sad ending of everything most desired by man---has been created by the young. But even in my time there have been superb examplars of the old as fertile and joyful givers---Casals, Stravinsky, Stokowski, Rubinstein, Georgia O'Keefe, Wallace Stevens, the Will Durants; Cousteau; the list could be endless. Each of us has known at least one old person who continued to be life-enhancing to the end, who made one look on old age as something marvelous, to be attained as all good things are, because of a passionate commitment to life.

Who wants it to be easy? Not surely the old themselves. They are well aware that growth is always costly, and that growing rather than withering into old age is no exception. How does one *grow* old?

I suspect there are as many answers to that question as there are individual human beings in the world. Old age does not mean that one ceases to be taken by surprise by life, or by love, for that matter. The myth that the old lack the capacity for love relationships has already been exploded by the psychologists, only it has not yet been fully absorbed by the laity.

Love, we still think, many of us, is for the young. But what do they know about it? It is hard for them to differentiate between sexual passion and love itself, for instance.

If the whole of life is a journey toward old age, then I believe it is also a journey toward love. And love may be as intense in old age as it was in youth, only it is different, set in a wider act, and the more precious because the time we have to enjoy it in is bound to be brief.

Old age is not a fixed point, any more than sunrise or sunset or the ocean tide. At every instant the psyche is in flux: " 'And like a newborn spirit did he pass / Through the green evening quiet in the sun," as Keats put it.

On the edge of old age myself, I sense that we may be "newborn spirits" at any moment in time. If we have the courage. Old age is not an illness, it is a timeless ascent. As power diminishes, we grow toward more light. □ © 1977 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

"The smallest package is the man all wrapped up in himself."

MAKE MINE A WHOPPER

James E. Kurtz

WE ARE LIVING IN A DAY WHEN "bigness" is what really matters. If it isn't ' 'big," it isn't worth much. So we think. We have been effectively brainwashed to look at the size of an object rather than the quality of it.

Come with me on a conversational journey in the course of which we can experience the impact this trend toward bigness has made.

It starts at the very conception of life. A pregnant woman --- she's "so big." The baby when born is such a "big baby;" particularly if the mother is small. Throughout adolescence and the 'teen years, things that are really important (?) are "big." We go to a "big school" with a "big student body" and a "big band" and "big sports." Graduation is "big."

As we move into adulthood, we strive to become a "big man" with a "big job" and a "big desk" in a "big office." We have a "big home" and drive a "big car" and belong to the "biggest clubs." Our TV set has a "big screen." In our social lives we know only the "biggest people." We are "big" at parties. We are "big drinkers" or "big gamblers." We are just plain "big"

Have you noticed how we have carried this craving for bigness over into our eating? We want a "double malt" or a "jumbo." Our hamburgers must be a "Whopper" or a "Big Mac." We want "double-dip" ice-cream and "foot-long" hot dogs. We are "big eaters."

Our town has a "big" shopping-center. We buy our groceries at "supermarkets."Our parks are "big" for the size of our town. Look at the "size" of her diamond. He makes "big money" because he works for a "big company." He is a "big-shot."

We have a beautiful "big" church with a "very large" choir. You should see its "big kitchen." The minister is "big" in civic activities. By the way, we are going to build a "bigger" church! And the evangelist coming to town will be holding a "big" meeting, leading a "big" crusade, in a "big" auditorium. We expect a "big" turnout and a "big"

love-offering.

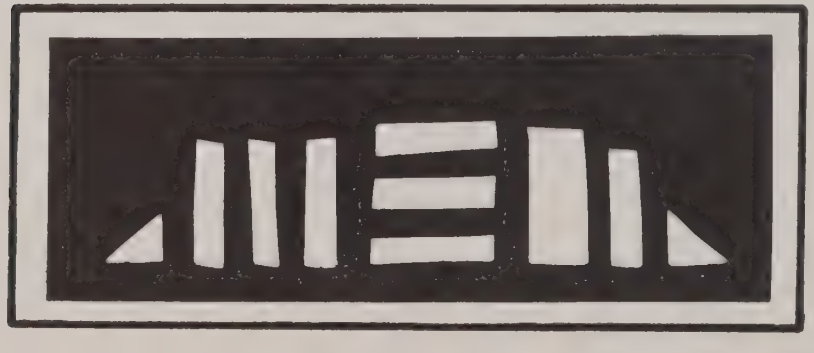
Our government believes in doing "big things" because we are a "big country." We need "big" taxes in order to build "superhighways" and support "big" armies, to build "big" ships and planes, and to stockpile "big" bombs so we can fight "big" wars.

Now, last but not least, we have "big" crimes, and the criminal had better retain a "big" lawyer or he will find himself in the "big house."

WHAT HAS HAPPENED to little things in America? The simple things in life---a "little fun," a "little joy," a "little happiness"? Where are the "little homes," the "little stores," the "little restaurants," the "little companies," the "little churches"? They have been swallowed up big bigness.

There is absolutely nothing evil in growth, or in progress, or whatever you want to call this process. But there is something definitely wrong in our attitude. We have this thing about "making it big," when what we ought to be concerned about is "making it better."

I like to be associated with big people, truly big. Minds that are big, hearts that are big, spirits that are big. I read somewhere that the smallest package is the man all wrapped up in himself. We have an abundance of such small packages. We find the worth of a thing when we remove all the wrappings. Our world needs big people ---big in the right areas of life. □



"WHY DO YOU PRAY?"

Bernadine Friedrich

MY THOUGHTS OFTEN GO BACK to the warm sunny afternoons I spent on the banks of a neighborhood park overlooking the city. Especially to one afternoon when a small boy came up to me, got down on his knees, looked me straight in the face, and asked, "Why do you pray?"

I had no time to think of an answer. I asked him, "Why do you?"

Without hesitation he replied, "Because Mommie says God gave me this beautiful day and I should thank Him."

With that, he left me to ponder my thoughts.

His question and his answer to mine left an everlasting imprint. Now, each day, I thank God for His gift to me of a day to fulfill my desires, my hopes, and my dreams. With each new opportunity I know this is my day to gain and grow. Added to my prayer of thanks is a request for guidance on how to reach the fulfillment of this day. □

MOTIVATION

Pollyanna Sedziol

THE PHONE RANG. The caller wanted my opinion as to whether or not she should send her kindergartner out into that cold windy afternoon on a four-block walk to school. It developed that her concern was not really for the child but "what will people say?"

In talking with her, I tried to help her see how unimportant that was. The real question was what would be best for the child, what the child would be comfortable with. To try to make decisions on the basis of what others think is to put oneself in the position of the boy in the fairy-tale who was sent to market for a variety of things and returned carrying each in an absurd way. The only valid question in any venture is whether or not the intended course of action will merit the Lord's "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. . . . ."

Lord of all life, help me to order my life each day according to that which will be well-pleasing to you. □

Job came out of all his troubles saying, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him." Are we able to meet the same supreme test?

HOW TO ACCEPT LIFE

Mildred Long

TO ACCEPT LIFE is one of the hardest lessons we have to learn. It is difficult for us to remember and truly believe these words of Paul the Apostle: "For we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." Perhaps the stumbling-block is that our love is not complete and our dedication to His will is not perfect. To accept life offers the supreme test. Job came out of all his troubles saying, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him."

We think we trust Him. But when sickness comes or "disaster" strikes, we often find out we are resisting. We are asking "Why?" and "What for?" We are pleading, "God, take away the pain!" It seems to be human to resist what does not please us.

Tom Dunham

Life has continually forced me into circumstances to test me in this area. And I ask myself how I manage to accept.

If we resist, we are not relaxing. To resist life---whatever it may be---is resisting God. For God is our life. There are many kinds of resistance: anxiety, fear, resentment, bitterness, anger. Even irritation is a form of resistance.

To resist life is to stop the flow of God's action and it cuts us off from His guidance and power. To relax in the face of difficulty, holding His peace within, will allow God's spirit to have sway.

Jesus was not disturbed by winds or waves. He had authority because He had peace within.

Before an onslaught let go, go limp. Let the wave wash over you,

and you will come out on the other side unhurt. Refuse to get excited or worried. Wait a bit in quiet expectancy. Many a word-battle is prevented because one party is silent. Many a problem becomes less of a problem when met with calmness.

This calmness is one aspect of faith. We need to train our thinking to remember that God is always with us, never forsakes us, and has infinite resources. Remember: "For God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tested above that you are able, but will with the testing make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." We must cultivate faith in God and in His promises We can also look back on our lives, most of us, and observe from this side how He brought us through the trial victoriously, or how He blessed us in the accepting of it.

We shall never be quite willing to accept life unless we are fully surrendered to His will, unless we believe His will is love and nothing can come to us except it come through His love. The Psalmist said,' 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He will bring it to pass." If we really love and trust Him, we will turn the whole matter over to Him and wait for His guidance or His redemption. Then there is no struggle of heart and mind. It is all trust and peace.

There is a story of a lady who through an accident seemed to be destined to be an invalid in a wheelchair. One of her friends remarked sadly, "Well, this will certainly color the rest of your life ""Yes," the lady smilingly replied, "but I intend to choose the color." Pain and sorrow or trouble of some kind will come to all of us just because we live in this world. Our attitude toward it, whatever it is, is all-important.

The late Glenn Clark, one of the masters of the prayer-life, said: "Love life. Turn it rightside-up and see the good in it." Love it? Love the pain, the anguish, the expense it caused, the loss of workhours?

Yes, love it. First, because as a child of God I am supposed to recognize that nothing comes to me except through His love; that nothing is lost in His economy; that He can turn "disaster" into triumph and loss into gain; that He will do this if we cooperate with His law of life.

Love it because you can use it as a stepping-stone to greater spiritual growth. The road to spiritual heights is like a series of steps toward a goal. It lifts the spirit nearer the blue sky of God's purpose.

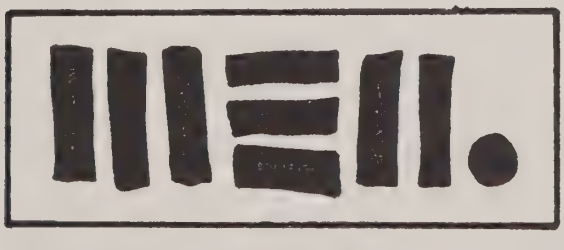
Love it because it makes you one with all of suffering humanity. Now you understand other people and their problems. Now you know how to sympathize. But more: you can help the other person turn his misfortune to advantage just because he sees you doing the same.

Love it because it is, because you love life and you love God. Can any of us say of life "This is good. I will accept it. And this is bad. I will discard it"? The diamond has a black, rough exterior. Shall we throw it away? The earth contains coal and oil and valuable minerals. Shall we fail to uncover and use them? By faith and hope and love we explore the vicissitudes of life and draw forth jewels of spiritual understanding.

Acceptance means a quiet, trusting dedication to God's will and way. This means appreciating the glories of this world, flowing with the flow of life, attaining harmony with oneself, coming into balance with life's rhythms such as the ebb and flow of the tides and the changing of the seasons.

This involves letting God change our sorrow into joy and our failure into success, living in quiet trust with the knowledge that all is well because we are in God's care, for as he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

To love life sends us back to God to seek His strength, His infilling, that we may rise above every obstacle and become master of circumstances. This is the greatest asset of all. It can lift the soul one step nearer the goal of partaking of the divine nature. □



PRAYERS OF VARIOUS FAITHS

Invocation: Teach us, O Lord, to see Thy life in all men and in all the people of the earth.

* * *

BUDDHIST: All praise be to the Lord, the Holy One, Perfect in Wisdom. I go to the Enlightened One for refuge, I go to the Law for refuge, I go to the Brotherhood for refuge.

CHRISTIAN: Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

CONFUCIAN: Oh, revere! Oh, revere! God is glorious! Help me to bear this burden on my shoulders, show me the glorious virtue and conduct.

HINDU: Let us meditate upon the Adorable Light of the Divine Vivifier. May He direct our minds!

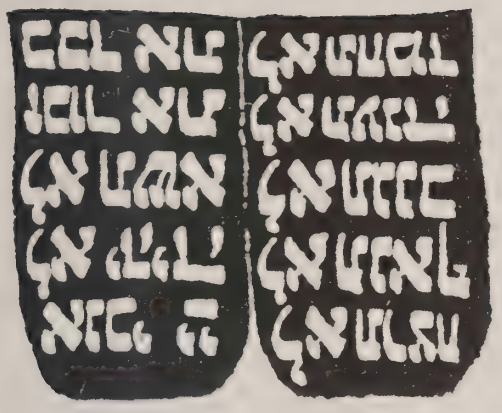
JAIN: Adoration to the Lord, the Destroyer of foes, the Supreme God, the King of those who have attained Victory.

JEWISH: Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.

MOSLEM: There is no Deity but God. All praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Master of the Day of Judgment.

TAO: To know the Eternal is Enlightenment. The Divine Way is the asylum of all things, the good man's treasure, the bad man's last resort.

ZOROASTRIAN: Blessed was the thought, and blessed was the Word, and blessed was the Deed of the Holy One. Purity is the best gift. Happiness is to him who is pure for the sake of purity. □



The religious regimen in which Jesus was raised illuminates the essential kinship of Christians and Jews

The Holidays Jesus Observed

Samuel M. Silver

INTRODUCTION

THE BOOKS about Jesus would fill an entire library. The saga of his life, his preachments, his parables, his vicissitudes, his agony, and his miracles has been propounded and elaborated upon. The imprint of Jesus on history is indelible. His life and death created a watershed in the development of humanity. Millions venerate him, and many await his return to earth. His followers, called Christians, envisage him as the one who provides them with guidelines (god-lines?) with respect to their proper conduct. We reckon time by his life. The year 1978, we say, and that means it was that many years ago that he was born (give and take some years, due to modifications in what is known as the Gregorian calendar). Yet, despite the voluminous data about Jesus, many of his admirers and many beneficiaries of his teachings are unfamiliar with his daily habitat or with the highlights of his

religious regimen. Hence we here present an exposition of those holidays which he and his family celebrated. We will also describe some of the life-cycle highlights of the people to whom he belonged.

We do this to provide Christians with more data about the background of the faith to which they subscribe. As for Jews, through our delineations they too will perhaps discover or rediscover the essential kinship between themselves and their fellow-theists who get their inspiration through the teachings and preachings of the central figure in their communion. This presentation is a derivative of the new age of ecumenism which we now enjoy.

The closeness of Judaism and Christianity is vaguely understood by many, but not clearly appreciated by too many. The affinity between them is that of mother and daughter. This was strikingly dramatized by Archbishop Fulton Sheen when he stood in the pulpit of my synagogue at a Sabbath-eve service and began his guest-sermon by saying, "I am happy to be here with you on this Sabbath-eve to tell you of the Jewish faith how sorry I am that your people and my people have been separated by a lovers'-quarrel."

The quarrel is dying down. The ecumenic trend does not mean a dimunition in the differences between the parent-faith, Judaism, and its offspring, Christianity. There are still differences between them, primarily between the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus. But differences should not lead to hostility.

Too often those who have disagreed have indulged in strife. Even sadder is the fact that groups who are close to each other have clashed. Indeed, fraternal wars are frequently the most vicious. They say that our American Civil War was our bloodiest. In history-books we read about the fury of religious wars, the Thirty Years' War, etc. In our own times those who have a natural consanguinity have been most hostile towards one another: witness the tragedy of Lebanon, the bloodshed in Belfast, and even the wars between the Israelis and their cousins the Moslems in the Middle East.

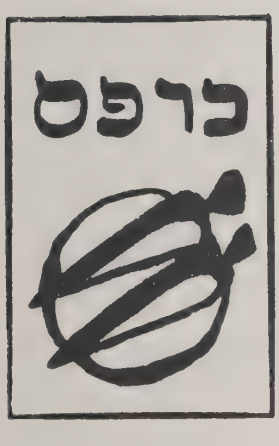
What happens, however, is not what must happen. Protestants and Catholics live in harmony in New York City. The Arab residents of Israel are, for the most part, contented. And in the new age ushered in by Pope John, the ecumenical spirit has fostered an appreciation of how our neighbors pray without the intrusion of xenophobia (that is, a fear of what is foreign or strange).

Indeed, the test of true religious maturity is not the desire for the elimination of differences but a respect for differences.

Judaism and Christianity are allies as well as relatives. Our common foe is paganism and cynicism. The stronger each of our respective communions is, the more stalwart our adherence to what is called the Judeao-Christian ethic, the nobler society will become. This is why I believe I am performing a service by introducing the followers of Jesus to the religious practices which he pursued in the course of his lifetime.

Which were the holidays and holy days he observed? What were the significant religious events in his life? Let's follow him about and trace his lifestyle as a worshipper of Almighty God.

Three Nature Festivals -- And How They Grew



THE RELIGION of Jesus was born down on the farm. Those who are close to the soil are prone to feel close to the soul that guides the universe. Farmers are acutely aware of their dependence on the rhythms of nature and the will of nature's God. The early Hebrews were tillers of the field, their lives intimately intertwined with the cycles of planting, harvesting, and reaping.

Before the Hebrews settled down on their farms, they had, we know, a nomadic period. Their wanderings in the desert are depicted by Biblical writers as movements towards the Land of Promise out of the Land of Bondage. The assigning of a purpose to their trek may have been romanticized in later years. The desert years recorded the life of the people as ancient-day Bedouins. And there is no doubt that there was extensive farming before there was extensive pasturing. The Lord himself is depicted as a shepherd because the figure of the shepherd was familiar to those who handled flocks and sought to shield them from the ravages of wild beasts.

The Hebraic faith became stabilized when the people became domesticated and looked after their farms and livestock. The land of Canaan was a tropical one. Hence there were at least two planting times, one in the spring and one in what we call the autumn. It is well known that just before the season of planting, the farmer enjoys a hiatus from his backbreaking toil. These interludes are times of both jubilation and trepidation. One is happy that there is a little respite from the laborious work in the fields. One is simultaneously concerned over the success of the next crop, over the question of whether or not the sun and the rain will cooperate to produce a bumper harvest.

This admixture of pleasure and trepidation is the chief component of three agricultural festivals which arose in ancient times. They are based on the upsurge of delight that comes to those released for the nonce from labor. In all cultures, as can be discovered in *The Golden Bough* and other anthropological studies, these times of respite are occasions for celebration. Often the celebration is totally hedonistic. Among some groups, it was orgiastic, given over to sheer sensuousness with the excuse that couplings by men and women would indicate to the gods the kind of fertility desired from the earth.

Those who fashioned the faith which Jesus came to know were on guard against such excesses. They recognized the legitimate validity of the yen to celebrate, and did indeed virtually decree that jubilation there should be. But they incorporated into the festive spirit the reminder that the source of life and the guarantor of good crops requires reverence and that He is repelled by what the Bible calls "abominations," that is, acts of lewdness or indifference to the respect which every creature of God owes to every other.

The agricultural festivals therefore acquired a layer of prayer. The practices associated with them were designed to produce not only a lift of morale but a lift of the soul, and we see writ large that upsurge of the heart in the Book of Psalms, which is saturated with devoutness of an exuberant kind and an exuberance with a tinge of devoutness.

We cannot precisely trace the way in which the architects of the

faith which Jesus practiced created these elements of awe and exhilaration. But we know that ultimately the connection was made and that, by the time Jesus came along, the nature festivals---which may have originated in mindless gaiety---were a delicious compound of pleasure and piety.

It is believed that there is a clash between religion and evolution. But, as one studies the Bible, one discerns that religion continually undergoes evolution, especially when it is guided by sensitive people who want to enhance the lives of others.

The Hebraic nature festivals reveal that kind of development. They started out as primitive rites and gradually were elevated into momentous and memorable occasions to give life purposefulness and meaning, significance, and enlightenment.

Passover

TO THE FARMER OF OLD, the beginning of the year was springtime. In our culture we begin in January, in the middle of winter. There is no logical reason for this, since the first of January is the commencement of no new season. We know there is even something wrong in designating December as the twelfth month, since "December" itself means "tenth." September, October, and November are similarly misnamed, implying that they are the seventh, eighth, and ninth months respectively rather than the ninth, tenth, and eleventh in our calendar.

The discombobulation of the months is probably due to the egomania of Julius Caesar and his successor Augustus. The Roman emperor wanted a month named after him in the middle of the year, and he decreed that such a month would be called July. Augustus emulated him, and thus July and August are embodied in the calendar, causing the semantic confusion indicated.

In any event, in days of yore, the year seemed to begin most logically with the advent of spring. The Jews greeted the beginning of each month with an observance. References in the Bible record the ceremonial welcoming of the new moon with prayer and song. And the month which brought springtime was especially important to the soil-worker. Gradually legends grew up to the effect that it was during that month that the people of Israel had experienced its own renascence.

The beginning of spring, in other words, was attached to the beginnings of peoplehood. It became the custom to link the release of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage with that time of the year that marked the release of nature from the bondage of the cold and frost.

Thus was Passover born. It was observed not on the first of the month, which came later to be known as Nisan, but the middle of the month, the fifteenth. The Hebrew calendar was based on the movements of the moon, but it was later adjusted to fit in with the sun-cycle; otherwise, the shorter lunar year would cause the holidays to drift around in the longer solar year.

By the adjustment of the lunar calendar to the movements of the sun, each year in the middle of the month of Nisan, then, the Jews begin their observance of the holiday of Passover, known in Hebrew as Pesach. (This word is the origin of the French word *paschal*---the holiday itself being known as *Pasque*.)

Passover is associated, of course, with the Scriptural narrative about the angel of death "passing over" the homes of Jews during the tenth plague which afflicted the Egyptians. But the term "pass over" later came to be more directly attached to the transition of the Hebrews from slavery to freedom.

The name of the holiday is rooted in the fascinating signification of the Hebrew word *pesach*, which has dozens of ramifications. All Hebrew words are based on verbs; all Hebrew verbs have three-letter roots. The Hebrew form *pah-sach* means "to skip."

The skipping took many forms and engendered a host of images. The angel of death leapfrogged over the houses in Egypt. The symbol of Passover became the lamb, whose gait is that of skipping or gambling. The idea of skipping is implicit also in the manner in which we greet the end of winter; we feel lithe and prone to leap about in joy. The coming of spring causes a surge of sprightliness within us all, and the farmer feels his spirits rising as the arrival of sunshine promises the production of a crop that will bring in food and revenue. The word *pah-sach* and its nominal derivative Pesach suggest these various forms of liveliness, and all found some manifestation in the way that the people of Jesus marked the arrival of the time of sunlight and warmth. This should not sound exotic to us, for what, after all, is our name for it? Spring!

Spring harvest

IN ITS PRIMORDIAL STAGE, then, Passover was the farmer's recognition of the coming of the spring plowing season. Before he dug into his new chores, he enjoyed a spree. The spree was often marked by highjinks and in some cases with prayerful petitions for the future to be bountiful.

The architects of Judaism sought to sublimate this joy, knowing that if the people were merely to indulge in meaningless magic or aimless cavorting, degeneracy would result. Those who created the Jewish faith knew that purposelessness or the worship of idols or false fancies could lead to the disappearance of a people. If such a people were not brought down by a more determined foe, it would sink into oblivion as a result of this inner futility.

How to knit normal human exuberance to loftier ideals was the task of the leaders of ancient Judaism. We cannot retrace the actual stages in this process, but we can discern the elements of the symbiosis from the pages of Holy Writ. To simplify, the Jewish leaders said, in effect, 'This season is not only the time of revitalization of the soil. It is also the time when our people was reborn after the long winter of servitude in Egypt.'

The ritual of Passover then reflected the way in which they related the nature-rites of the season to the commemoration of the uprising, under Moses, against Pharoah.

The theme of rebirth, which was also celebrated in Greek lore, ultimately found its way into Christianity, with Jesus as the prime factor in the process. Spring means resurrection. Passover glorifies the resurrection of the people. Another spring holiday, Easter, eventually carried out this theme with the resurrection of Jesus himself.

The Lamb

SYMBOLIC of the spring season is the frolicsome exuberance which strikes us all when that time of year comes around. And the animal with the skipping gaiti as we have indicated, is the lamb.

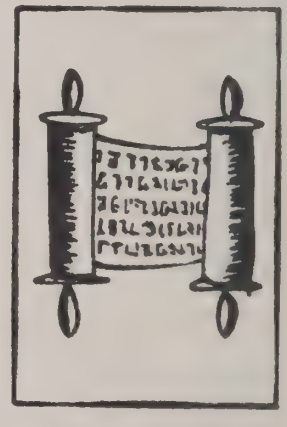
We must now recall that in ancient times the Jews had a sacrificial system. In an agricultural society, wealth was the produce of the farm and the animals on the farm. One indicated one's devotion to God by willingness to give up a portion of one's revenue to the Almighty.

You expressed your piety by your willingness to offer up part of your possessions to God. This was done in the holy area of the central sanctuary in Jerusalem, and it was accomplished by statements of fealty to God and His purposes. His purposes included the care of the disadvantaged. Again and again we read in the Bible that the worshipper was to look after the needs of "the orphan, the widow, and the stranger."

The offerings of animals or farm produce became a fixed part of the system of veneration of God. This system is the forerunner of our income-tax and also of our churches' practice of tithing (the surrender of a tenth of our incomes for holy use.)

The word used to describe these offerings is 'sacrifice.' Dismantle that word, and you find it means to "make holy." It's a good term. If you can bring yourself to donate some of your material goods to aims greater than yourself or the satisfaction of your own appetites, you have "made holy" these material items.

That was the principle underlying the Biblical system of sacrificing. In Hebrew the term for sacrifice is *korban*, which has as its stem the verb "to come close to." You came close to the Almighty when you imitated Him in serving others. Talmudic tales envisaged God as ministering to people: one of His first acts was to clothe Adam and Eve; one of his later ones was to bury Moses. As God aids others, so we too must be willing to look after the needs of others. One of the most effective ways of doing this was to surrender a bit of what we have earned by the sweat of our brows, that is, of our property, and make it holy by donating it to the temple and thus drawing nigh unto the spirit of the Lord.



All kinds of sacrifices are specified in the Bible, especially in the Book of Leviticus. If you committed a sin, you made a sacrifice. If you felt pangs of guilt, you sought to become reconciled to God with an offering in the temple. If you wanted to express your desire for peace in the world, you brought a sacrifice. If you were favored with good fortune, you displayed your appreciation with a sacrifice. If you reached a

milestone, you shared your feelings with others through a free-will offering. And if you observed a holiday, you likewise repaired to the holy site and donated something valuable to the temple, whose priests, in turn, distributed your largesse to the needy.

For each holiday an appropriate animal or grain was designated. For Passover, what was more suitable than the lamb? The main course at the Passover feast also came from the flock. That started the lamb on its way through Jewish practice into Christian theology---with Jesus himself ultimately being alluded to as the sacrificial offering, the Lamb of God.

(This first part of THE HOLIDAYS JESUS OBSERVED will be continued in future issues.)

PRAYER

Lillian Koerner

I pray for a generous heart, my Lord,
full of grace, I pray;
to let me share unstintingly
Your love given to me.

I pray for steadfast strength, my Lord,
to bend with the gales of life,
as a sapling embraces the swirling storms,
with prophecy to stand upright.

I pray your joy and peace, my Lord,
drop dew on the raging fires
that blur my vision, my heart and mind,
my self, dear Lord, unbind.

Tom Dunham

NATURE'S BEAUTY

Virginia Ladd Otis

JOHN BURROUGHS SAID, "It is not so much what we see on nature-walks as what it suggests. The walker experiences the country he passes through."

I was reminded of these words as I hiked about the shore of a small lake one May. A bough of shad bush in full bloom leaned out over the water, a motif worthy of oriental art. Its fragile form was traced against three elements: blue water, misty shoreline, pale sky.

Chinese and Japanese artists of centuries ago specialized in landscape-painting and nature-subjects, which they executed with marvelous grace. These artists often sat for hours contemplating a tree or scene they wished to paint. They would sit until their perceptions became a sense of unity with the subject. Only then, when they were able to identify with the essence of the life of the subject, did they attempt to begin to paint.

Such awareness and concentration can scarcely be realized by most of us, since our minds and senses are scattered among many interests.

Sri Ram once said, "There is a deep purpose in nature, which is the unfoldment of all things, of the hidden beauty in them. In this unfoldment there is joy, there is creation, there is beauty."

Nature's beauty surrounds us. . . . . But, to appreicate it fully, we must develop an awareness of it and a sensitivity to it. Communing with nature is more than a pastime, more than a passive exercise, more than an aesthetic pursuit. It is communion withthe spirit of beauty which underlies the whole of creation. The awe and gratitude we feel as a result of this communion are the opposites of boredom and emptiness They are a means of saying "yes" to life. □

Some of us do not have enough faith
and confidence in ourselves to reach out

ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE

Arthur W. Muller

IN THE STUDY OF ANY LANGUAGE teachers emphasize the importance of the strong words. Not only should we remember them but whenever possible we should practice their meaning and use in our daily lives. One of these words denoting strength and vigorous expression is the word "challenge."

Many of us are confronted with problems to solve, tasks to perform, obstacles to hurdle. But will we all be capable of facing these challenges? Now, in my retirement, I remember a profound thinker by the name of Norvell whom I heard in the late 'forties lecturing on the subject of positive thinking. Never have any doubts that you can not carry out your plans. His guidance changed my way of thinking nnd transformed me from a sitter in a corner to a go-getter of ambition and self-assurance.

I was put to the test about three months ago when I was offered a commission to paint a mural in watercolors on the wall of a surgeon's home in my town. As a retired artist, I found this something almost breathtaking to attempt. However, recalling Norvell's admonitions, I heartily accepted the challenge.

The design was a Chinese floral wallpaper composition consisting of sixteen colors on an area forty feet square. After seven weeks, I completed it. It turned out to be an exquisite decoration. The family expressed their satisfaction with it. At a reception later, I was gratified by the compliments of their guests.

Some of us do not have enough faith and confidence in ourselves to reach out from the little things and succeed in more interesting and more meaningful ones --- to accept any challenge within reason and earn the reward for a task well done. □

DEFINING WHAT IS WANTED
& *OTHER STORIES*

Francis Merchant

Defining What Is Wanted

A GROUP OF DEVOTEES spent long days in prayer and fasting, hoping that their devotion and austerities would cause the Angel Gabriel to manifest. How long they continued their supplications, no one knows, but eventually their prayers were answered. Shining resplendently the angel appeared.

There was a long pause during which perfect silence reigned. Finally the Angel spoke.

"What do you want me to tell you?" he asked.

"Everything," said one of the devotees.

"That is an unreasonable request, impossible of fulfillment," the Angel said---and vanished.

Undaunted, the devotees continued their devotions until the Angel appeared again.

"What do you want me to tell you?"

After a pause, one of the suppliants said, "Nothing."

"If I am supposed to communicate nothing," the Angel declared, "there is no need for my presence." So saying, he de-materialized.

Even though the band of devotees was disappointed, they continued to persist.

For a third time the Angel appeared in their midst and asked the same question.

No one said anything.

"Answers can only come from questions," the Angel said. "Your silence indicates to me that the cups of your desire cannot be filled with words."

And then it faded from view.

Hoarding Truth

A CERTAIN YOUNG MAN was traveling through a desolate forest when he came upon a hermit seated in meditation.

His curiosity aroused, the young man waited respectfully till the other had completed his devotions and then began to converse with him.

"Why have you left the haunts of men to live in this place of solitude?" asked the young man.

"Because of the truth," replied the other.

"The truth? How could it persuade you to forsake society?"

"When I was young," said the hermit, "I told people too much of the truth and so did them harm."

"How can that be?" exclaimed the young man. "Doesn't everybody want the truth? How could you harm others by being truthful?"

"The human race can't stand very much truth," the hermit replied. "I told them that they were frittering away their lives on trivialities, living in a manner that would hardly do credit to animals---and they disliked intensely what I said."

"How much of the truth do you think human beings can stand?" the young man wondered.

"One sixth of the true to five sixths adulteration," the hermit declared. "Whenever I altered this proportion, I gave offense."

"And so the truth made a hermit out of you," the young man said.

"It's a precious commodity, I decided, and should be hoarded just as men hoard gold and precious stones. Too much of it might prove destructive to the human race in its present condition."

"Do you think, then, that it is necessary to lie to people in order to save them from themselves?"

"Nature conceals her jewels," responded the hermit. "We live in a world of energies, but we are deluded into believing that only matter exists. We are encompassed by lies. The universe is one, but we see it as many."

"Such truths could indeed be shattering," the young man agreed. "And you will find few human beings who care to hear them. To whom can you speak of such matters?"

"I hold converse with the stars," the hermit replied. "They honor greatly the chalice of undefiled truth."

God's Will

A STUDENT who frequented libraries and read many books came again and again upon the phrase "God's will." Whenever he attended church and heard a sermon, this concept was bound to be mentioned. Strangely enough, few people could define what it meant. Everything that happened was supposed to refer to it.

The student puzzled over this matter for some time and finally decided to consult various persons of repute who might shed light on this subject. He went to ministers, doctors, scholars, professors, and politicians, but no one seemed able to satisfy him. They always became elusive and vague when they were asked for a precise definition.

Finally the student found a lawyer who thought about the matter, as lawyers do, in legal terms.

"God's will?" said the lawery. "Why, it must be a document registered in the Hall of Records. Of course, I don't remember ever having read such a will, but so many people have referred to it that it must exist somewhere."

"Could you find it for me?" the student asked.

"I'll try," said the lawyer. And he was as good as his word. Some time later, he visited the student and waved an ancient, time-yellowed parchment in the air.

"I told a learned judge about the matter," the lawyer said, "and he instituted an exhaustive search. At last someone found this document. Here it is!"

The young man took it eagerly and started reading.

"I hereby devise and bequeath to the whole human family, to have and to hold," the document read, "the vast earth with all its mountains, rivers, plains, continents, and oceans, as well as the background-scenery of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Further, I bequeath the green meadows to the children of the world in which to play. Also, I grant each human being the gift of time, lasting from birth to death, in which to enjoy life. All this I do devise and bequeath to the end that everyone born on the face of the earth may, by the right use of this inheritance, establish a permanent claim to an even more munificent divine inheritance. (Signed), The Maker."

The student found the document intriguing. "How is it," he wondered, "that this will is unknown and been hidden away in the archives

for untold centuries? Shouldn't it be spread abroad so that everyone might claim his inheritance?"

The lawyer was dubious. "You will note," he said, as canny lawyers do, "that this undated will has not been probated. Furthermore, no witnesses have attested to the legality of this instrument. Moreover, the statute of limitations probably invalidates it. Again, it would upset so many of our established institutions that the High Court would refuse to accept any case growing out of it."

Sorrowingly and wonderingly the student turned away.

The Catalogue of Differences

A CERTAIN TEACHER was in the habit of asking his disciples the following questions:

What is the difference between a xylophone and a human being?
What is the difference between a stone and a human being?
What is the difference between a rose-petal and a human being?

The meditation based on these three questions he called *The Catalogue of Differences.*

Many of his disciples had difficulties in arriving at meaningful conclusions.

If they failed to come up with perceptive answers, he would become more specific:

What happens if you strike a xylophone with a mallet?
What happens if you deal a glancing blow to a stone?
What happens if you grind a rose-petal into bits?

The answers to these questions were not so difficult:

The xylophone, when struck, emits a melodious tone.
The stone, when dealt a blow, gives forth a spark.
A rose-petal, when ground, yields delicate perfume.

Now, then, what happens when you strike a man? □

NOTICES & COMMENT

MISS BERGMAN. We are happy to announce the appointment, as of January 19, of Joy Bergman as Assistant Secretary of Fellowship in Prayer. Born in London, England, but brought to this country while still a child, she attended preparatory school in New York City, Bard College, and The Neighborhood Playhouse School for the Theater. She worked in Off-Broadway and summer-stock as both assistant-director and stage-manager. She then founded The American Theater For Children and for six years served as its artistic director. A non-profit corporation to bring free, original, firstrate theater to children, the Theater performed at the Willowbrook School for Retarded Children, The Lighthouse for the Blind, as well as at The Circle in the Square and the Actors Playhouse. She gave up the Theater because of the difficulties of financing it. Since, she has devoted her energies to the Frick Art Reference Library, where she was assistant to the art-cataloguer, and to her poems ---s Several of which appear in this and several previous issues. Originally Jewish, she became a Roman Catholic convert fourteen years ago, being baptized in St. Louis Cathedral in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE. It now costs five dollars a year (six dollars overseas) to subscribe to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, which is published in February, April, June, August, October, and December.

****

Fellowship in Prayer
Box 3049, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017

Date.....

I enclose $.....in payment of a subscription to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER for.....year (s), and $.....toward furthering the work. May God add His blessing! (All contributions are tax-deductible.)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....Zip Code.....

EDI TORIAL (*Continued from page 3)*

to cast my vote. This proved to be the opportunity I was looking for. I went to the polls and cast my vote for Mr Roosevelt, thereby taking a huge stride toward finding out who I was. I did not notice until later that it was also a huge step toward separating myself from my family, who were Republican to a degree of passion that I did not dare to tell them what I'd done. . . or who I was turning out to be.

Instead of a discovery, though, it strikes me that my search for identity was actually a deliberate invention, step by step, of what I decided I would be. By hindsight I can see that it was often just a going-against what I had been brought up to be. Having no notion of who I was, I declared myself by at least knowing what I was not.... This method was very quickly my undoing, for it encouraged me in a lifelong yearning to be "different". (Such a yearning is hardly comprehensible nowadays when we are energetically doing our own thing.) And so I set out on a career of the most egocentric and most willful assertion of self: and all for the sake of trying to learn what this self might be. It is now all too clear to me that ego is really nothing but the pain of not knowing what one is. Memory tells me that it was genuninely painful. And, above all, lonely. I used to attempt to alleviate the loneliness by reminding myself of the popular myth that it was the price that had to be paid for being special.

Although I daydreamed of being a special person, more often than not the specialness seemed to be freakiness. I felt as out of contact with others, as out of all hope of contact, as if I were Frankenstein's monster. This, inevitably, was when I began to patronize the psychiatrists, sitting for fifty minutes a day sometimes trying to discover what was wrong with me, why I was so alone. I could not understand it for (literally) the life of me.

Such alienation, feeding on itself and metastasizing, is obviously one cause of the terrible loneliness to be suffered in our society. It is terrible because we suffer it in the name of doing what we believe is expected of us. It is terrible to the degree that it sets us off from our fellow beings, that it separates us not only from them but from the lesser of God's creations, indeed from the earth and the weather and the seasons as they fall around us like the blossoms of flowering trees. It is terrible because we are so alone in it ---P.G.

PSALM

Simonne Dickinson

On Sabbath, God did not rest.
He made angels' duplicates:
feathers the texture of sunlight,
wings of gold, cerise, green;
nature's poem; visible feast.
Adorable miniatures,
they fly at low altitudes
hesitating sipping
honeysuckle nectar;
spying -- territorial imperative --
from the corners
of infinitesimal eyes

On the seventh day,
God created hummingbirds.

TABULAE RASAE

Clark M. Olmstead

I have found a peaceful isolation---
a blessed stillness.
It is in calm prayer,
contemplation of my God.

I feel like a child
bathing in milk,
aware of only a vast emptiness
vastly filled with green beginnings,
calm waters reflecting sky and
sun-laced clouds breathing birds.

I am restored. I see
my original face
in the Earth's dust.